

Some of the Difficulties in Southern Schools

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WHAT are the difficulties in our schools in the South? We want to keep in mind two facts. First, the tendency to-day is towards the shortening of the school term in the colored schools. A few years ago the colored schools had the same term as the whites, but gradually within the last ten years they have been diminishing and shortening the terms where they have had schools.

Another fact is that they are lowering the standard of the public schools. In Chattanooga, a few years ago, the colored schools were on a par with the white schools. They were just as careful about the selection of teachers as the white schools. To-day it is very different, and they have reduced the grades in the colored schools, making them lower than a few years ago. This is true all over the South, as a rule.

"Reaching the Outlying Districts"

We ought to have church societies, so as to reach the outlying districts away from the centers and the railroads. Eighty-three per cent of the Negroes of this country are in the country. Only seventeen per cent can be found in our cities. This eighty-three per cent must depend largely upon the schools established by the various denominations for education, for the public school system makes but little provision for the education of those living in the rural districts.

I have known of schools in some of the country districts where they have not had school for one or two years, and where the schools have been established they averaged six weeks in a year.

Tennessee had no normal institution for the preparation of teachers for colored schools until a few years ago. To supply in part this deficiency, the state appropriated \$10,000 for a normal training school for the youth of African descent. The beneficiaries of this fund were appointed by the state senators, which appointment was worth \$50 to the one appointed. This was to pay the entire expenses. This enabled a great many of the young Negro people to obtain preparation for good teaching. Three years ago the appropriation was withdrawn and since then there has been no provision made.

Another fact is, that while the sympathy of the South is manifest more largely than it was a few years ago, the sympathy of the North is going from us. There is not that intense interest that we found twenty, twenty-five, and thirty years ago, and it is true not only in the laity but in the ministry. I am sorry to say that it is true even in our own church. They lack the sympathy among us in our ministry, so that when they undertake to preach the gospel they do it half-heartedly. It is difficult to secure teachers in the North who are interested sufficiently in the work to become a part of it. There are some young teachers who desire to obtain experience in order to get increased salaries, who will take work in our Southern schools, but they lack the deep interest and missionary spirit which characterized those who engaged in it in former years. Now and then we find teachers of Southern birth who are interested and become faithful and efficient teachers, and who remain with us longer than some of those from the North. In twenty-five years there has not been a single year but I have had one teacher of Southern birth. We now have five, born and educated in the South, who are doing splendid work for the Master.



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Twenty-seven years ago, I could scarcely walk on the sidewalk without being insulted, or jostled off, and in many ways they displayed their antipathy to our work. But for several years past that feeling has given way to a kindlier feeling.

The majority of our best people endorse the work and are willing to help. Recently the Board of Trade of Morristown subscribed \$1,000 toward a new building.

The white people of the South are friends of the Negro. They afford opportunities for a livelihood, which are denied him in the North. He is the mechanic of the South, Negro painters, plumbers, or carpenters frequently working on the same scaffold with white men. It is but just to say that with all of the supposed sympathy for the Negro in the North, he finds greater opportunities for work in the South than in the North.